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BREAD & ROSES

Issue 1, Summer 1997. Publication of the Industrial Workers of the World

£1

"Dreams for the Future ...."

FIVE MORE YEARS OF HARD LABOUR?

Bread & Roses

Issue 1

Bread & Roses is the publication of the Industrial Workers of the World .

The articles published in this issue have come from members of the union involved in a variety of industries and living in different geographical areas : Education, Health Service, Retail / Distribution, Unemployed, Public Service workers; Glasgow, Edinburgh, Swindon, Bournemouth, Tyne & Wear and Reading.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed.

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Front cover photo by Ian Elliot

Printed by Clydeside Press Limited, Glasgow.

Bread & Roses
The Voice of Industrial Unionism

The title Bread & Roses takes its name from the famous IWW textile strike at Lawrence, USA in 1912. During one of the strike parades young mill - women carried a banner bearing the words "We want bread and roses too".

Now, as then, while we fight for improved wages and conditions we recognise the need to create a better society where all of us are free from the poverty and pain of wage - labour.

Connolly on the IWW

" The most dispersive and isolating force at work in the labour movement today is craft unionism, the most cohesive and unifying force, industrial unionism. In view of that fact all objections which my comrades make to industrial unionism on the grounds of the supposedly, or truly, anti - political bias of many members of the Industrial Workers of the World is quite beside the mark. That question at the present stage of the game is purely doctrinaire. The use or non - use of political action will not be settled by the doctrinaires who may make it their hobby today, but will be settled by the workers who use the Industrial Workers of the World in their workshop struggles. And if at any time the conditions of a struggle in shop, factory, railroad or mine necessitate the employment of political action those workers so organized will use it, all theories and theorists to the contrary notwithstanding. In their march to freedom the workers will use every weapon they find necessary"

(James Connolly 'Industrialism & Trade Unionism', International Socialist Review, Feb 1910. Quoted in P Berresford Ellis : James Connolly Selected Writings, Pluto Press, 1988 edition, p.173)

"So that all workers regardless of their religious or political preference may be united to get every possible benefit out of their job, the IWW must be non - political and non - religious, letting its members attend to these matters as they personally see fit..."

(IWW : One Big Union pamphlet, 1979 ed, p.20)

Tolpuddle Martyrs Rally,Dorset, 20 July

Anyone wishing to participate on the march or help with the IWW stall contact : Ray Carr, Flat 2, 35 Parkwood Road, Boscombe, Dorset, BH5 2BS, or ring Kevin Brandstatter on (01793) 610707.

Order Bread & Roses 2

Issue 2 of Bread & Roses will be out in Autumn / Winter. If you would like to order a copy / copies the price is £1 per copy. Please make cheques / P.O's payable to I.W.W. and send orders to : IWW, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 4WB.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever - growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system". It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for everyday struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

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Join The IWW

If you want more information about the IWW and Industrial Unionism, or would like an application form to join the Union then contact :
Industrial Workers of the World, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 4WB.

Let's Work It Out

In April, it was revealed that hundreds of thousands of unemployed who supposedly had been found work by the Tory government's Employment Service, had not. The Employment service staff had been pressurised to hit government set targets, and Jobcentre managers were desperate to meet performance - related pay targets and consequently they were guilty of orchestrating a scandalous breach of rules.

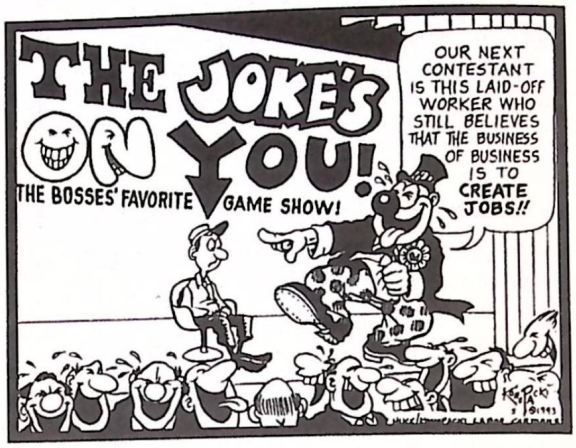
Cases were found where unemployed claimants who had taken part voluntarily in police identification parades were recorded as having found work. One method used to record a claimant as having found work was for staff to place a 'P' (placement) beside a person's name after the individual had inquired after a vacancy.

The revelations brought widespread condemnation of a government desperate to stay in power at any cost and calls from many labour bodies for a shake - up in the way the unemployed are actually calculated.

Unemployment is presently recorded as standing at 1.7 million - a figure that would have brought cries of derision from opposition benches only months ago. The unemployment figures now bring silence from Tories and Labour alike. Both are aware that the 32 changes the Tories made over 18 years conceal the true level of unemployment and that a more reliable figure, based on 1979 methods of calculation, is about 4 million. Sooner or later the issue will have to be confronted. This much has already been promised by the new Labour Government.

In May, the TUC were demanding an internationally recognisable system for measuring unemployment, arguing that monthly figures should be based on a system employed by the International Labour Organisation - figures which already appear every three months in Labour Force Survey statistics.This, they argue, would restore a general confidence in official figures while providing policy makers with a reliable indicator of the goings on in the labour market. However, for some ministers, even the ILO method lacks appeal, for their figures place unemployment at 2.1 million, a 400,000 increase on the present unemployed total.

Tied in with the government's prevarication on the true unemployed total issue, is the time - honoured and entrenched ministerial failure to locate unemployment in an unstable political and economic system whose essential features included conflict and contradiction, instability and dislocation; a system in which crises and depression, bankruptcy and unemployment are a result of the contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production.


THE JOKE'S ON YOU!
THE BOSSES' FAVORITE GAME SHOW!
OUR NEXT CONTESTANT IS THIS LAID-OFF WORKER WHO STILL BELIEVES THAT THE BUSINESS OF BUSINESS IS TO CREATE JOBS!!

Under the present system - capitalism - unemployment and recession occur irrespective of the policies of governments. This happens because governments cannot make the economy work in accordance with their desires, but are forced to adapt their policies to what the economy requires, and the profit system requires that priority be given to making profits over and above anything else, even if this results in a rise in unemployment.

Governments thus can't control the economy or reduce unemployment at will because the economy controls them. This much workers should have learned from the previous four Labour administrations and from 18 years of Tory misrule.

On the previous four occasions when Labour was in power they entered office promising full employment, but left office with unemployment higher than when they entered. The Tories claimed they had found a solution, but only by taking 2.5 million off the unemployed register.

We await with interest the outcome of the economic tamperings of Messrs. Blair, Brown and Blunkett, but with no real expectation that the problem of unemployment will be addressed for the better over the next five years.

■ ***John Bissett.***

The State & Industrial Organisation

> *"How far the Labour government will or should go in supporting organised labour is in reality of little importance. The major point is : should workers rely on the State at all ? The answer to this must surely be an unequivocal no"*

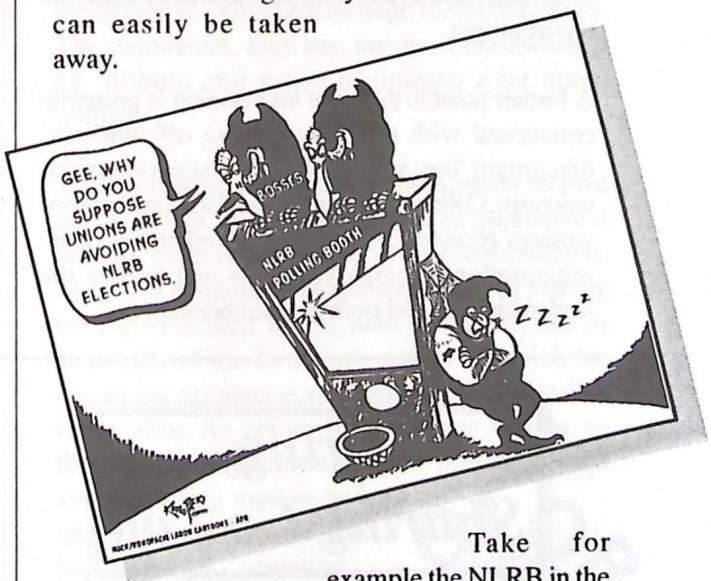
The article in the May 'Industrial Worker' on the 1935 National Labour Relations Act (NLRA) and the National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) in the USA is of interest to workers in this part of the world, especially with the recent election of a Labour Government.

An argument of the left, most of whom supported the election of a Labour government , was that despite their move to the right they would probably act more favourably to the unions than another Conservative administration. A similar argument was made for the election of the Democratic Party in America. The two parties are practically identical and both have also moved so far to the right that they now mirror their major political rivals - the Conservatives and Republicans.

The left point to the fact that Labour are likely to implement the European Social Charter and there is also the much talked about minimum wage. Many think that Labour should go further and introduce legislation to help unions recruit members and force employers to enter into collective bargaining where unions have more than fifty per cent membership. Something along similar lines to the NLRB in the USA.

How far the Labour government will or should go in supporting organised labour is in reality of little importance. The major point is : should workers rely on the State at all ? The answer to this must surely be an unequivocal no.

There are two fundamental drawbacks with relying on the state for "labour rights". The first of these is what is given by the state can easily be taken away.



Take for example the NLRB in the USA in the 1930's. As the article in the 'Industrial Worker' indicates the reason behind the introduction of the NLRA in the first place was the belief in some circles that the depression of that period was, in part, due to the fact that

employers had been so successful in holding down wages. However, over time, the legislation was watered down to the point where it has become a weapon for employers in preventing unionisation. In Britain the 1974 Labour government brought in legislation that restored the right to strike and picket to the position prior to the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. They encouraged collective bargaining and increased workers' rights and job security. By the early 1990's not only had this been removed but organised labour was in the worst position since the period following the 1926 General Strike.

The position of organised labour was mostly weakened under a series of Conservative administrations from 1979. However, organised labour had already started to pay for the change in labour laws prior to the election of Thatcher with three years of pay constraint under the Labour government. As with the situation in the USA in the 1930's, state intervention took place to stabilise the situation, this time to calm a seemingly militant mood amongst workers following the Miners' strikes of 1972 and '74 and the discontent with Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

In both situations the state was able to withdraw the rights it had conceded. Having relied on state intervention rather than its own organisation, the workers' movement lacked the class consciousness, organisation and solidarity needed to defend itself in a hostile political and economic environment.

A further point is that state intervention is primarily concerned with not only buying off workers' discontent but strengthening institutionalised unionism. Collective bargaining whilst it may improve workers' economic position, can subordinate workers' organisation to employer goals and tighten the leadership's control over the membership.

The problem collective industrial organisation faces today is not merely a numerical one. It is more one of content. A dramatic increase in the membership of mainstream unions dominated by the TUC's ideas of the so - called "New Unionism" of the 1990's would be meaningless. This would simply mean a growth of Business Unionism where workers' interests are tied to the goals of employers. The TUC is following the road of the AFL in America, following "the Road to Nowhere".

What we need is a real New Unionism, built on the fundamental principles of Solidarity and Class awareness. The profit system divides us enough. We do not need half a dozen or more unions in each industry helping to set worker against worker. One union in each industry (Industrial Unionism) is just a starting point. We need to be aware of who the real enemy is. As members of the working class we are employed, become wage slaves, only if a profit can be made out of us. Our industrial organisation needs to be built not merely on the basis of defending ourselves within the profit system but also on the basis of transcending our position as mere cogs in the economic machinery.

As members of the One Big Union (OBU) we argue against relying on state intervention. This is the same state that oppresses us in the interests of our bosses. Neither do we depend on leaders. These are the same leaders that time after time sell us out and end up with jobs in industry, as Lords or as Members of Parliament. All we can rely on is ourselves, the self - organisation of men and women with the aim of positive self defence today and a new world tomorrow. Do yourself a favour - join us in the OBU.

■ *Ray Carr.*

Caring, Sharing Co - op

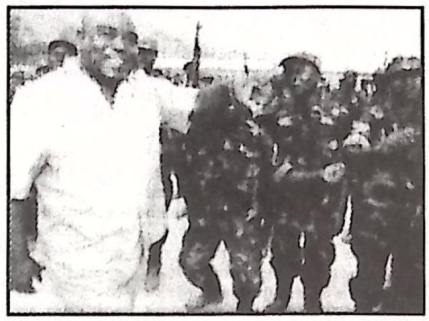
Workers in Co - operative Retail Services experience the joint standards that all companies operate under.

Those who do all the useful work will receive a rise of just 3% for the 1997 - 8 period . A rise recommended for acceptance by the shopworkers' "union" (well, they still call themselves a union.) Higher management continue to receive the usual perks. The area manager covering the Hants and Dorset area has just been given a new £25,000 car to drive around in. You can lay money on one thing (that is if you can afford to fork out any money on the pittance of a wage you get with firms such as CRS) he is not the only one. The answer for CRS and all other workers is to organise in a union we control.

■ *YARRAC (CRS wage slave)*

What Future For ZAIRE ?

When you live in a society in which you are taught self - contempt and mistrust of your own intelligence (a situation which could actually apply anywhere), a country ruled by a power - hungry, self - serving and corrupt president for 30 years , a country never praised for its democratic process and human rights record, then the appeal of Laurent Kabila, the self - appointed leader of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), becomes understandable.



Laurent Kabila

Like any leader worth his salt, Kabila has promised much - democratic elections, peace, prosperity and hope. Any one of these was bound to be a winner for Zaireans, their country milked of $4 billion by former President Mobuto and his henchmen over thirty years, their lives blighted by waste, want and war in a country potentially the richest in Africa with sizeable deposits of oil, coal, gold, silver, diamonds, cobalt, uranium and cadmium.

The warning signs, however, have been well telegraphed. Just as Mobuto rose to power in a CIA backed coup over thirty years ago, so too has Kabila come to prominence with the backing of a U.S. all too desperate to wrestle control of central Africa from their French rivals for its own ends.

The atrocities of Kabila's forces have been well documented since they set out on their Westward march on Kinshasa back in October 1996, and there are still survivors of Kabila's last stint in power, ruling the Bembe of eastern Zaire from the mid - 60's until the late '70's, who will testify he is an arrogant and violent authoritarian opportunist whose antics sickened even Che Guevara, who visited him in 1967.

Perhaps the fact that the Congo is so rich in mineral wealth is reason enough to suggest that any peaceful settlement will be short - lived. Which Western power elite will not be trying to out -manoeuvre their rivals on these squares of the imperialist chess board ? What else can Kabila's new regime mean for the West, other than new bribes, contracts and land - rights and all the other filthy wheeling and dealing that characterises a profit - driven market system ?

And look where Congo is situated - central Africa, bordering eight countries, most of which are stamped already with the U.S. bald eagle. To the north - east lies an Iran - friendly and anti - U.S. Sudan, a country more likely than any other in Africa to attempt to thwart U.S. ambitions.

Kabila's alliance have decided that Congo is not ready for elections yet, but that it will be when reconstruction is under way and the people re - educated through local collectives. The population, they say, has been brainwashed by Mobutu and needs to unlearn a lot about politics.

Whatever political education the workers receive under Kabila's new regime, we can guarantee it will not be in revolutionary class consciousness. They will no more be taught the futility of placing their trust in their leader, than being educated as to the ills of the two class system in which the means for producing an abundance is controlled by an elite. As before the emphasis will be on there being no alternative to the present corrupt and degrading system and, as before, they will continue to be taught self - contempt and to mistrust their own ideas.

■ ***John Bissett.***

Triumphalism
Resignation or Reality ?

A Report from the PTC, 1997 Annual Delegate Conference

Blackpool in May, it's Conference season for the unions and for three days members of the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union met in the Victorian splendour of Blackpool's Winter Gardens.

PTC is the largest union organising in the Civil Service and was the first such union to hold a conference since the public had appointed a new set of bosses for state employees.

The conference was a strange affair with most of the thousand delegates exhibiting a collective case of post - election euphoria. This was the first time that this writer had seen workers cheering their new bosses and meaning it. This triumphalism overshone the conference but by the end of day three delegates departed in resignation that perhaps things had not changed after all. They were forced to accept the reality that the new government's policies were a continuation of those of the old one.

There were a couple of high points, much controversy and the spectre of a union leadership being totally out of touch with its activists.

The leadership is elected by individual postal ballot and only a quarter of members voted in 1997. The victorious faction - almost all Labour Party loyalists - were supported by just over one - eighth of the union's membership but they took this to mean total support for their plans to individualise the union's membership. They are doing this in a particularly Machiavelian fashion, in concert with the leadership of a sister civil service union - CPSA.

The unions plan to merge on 1 January 1998 and the leaderships produced a draft rule - book for a merged union which would destroy many of the structures for accountability and give the merged unions' leadership almost unlimited power. PTC's conference amended this draft rule - book to restore a semblance of accountability, decisions echoed by CPSA's conference.

It appears that the arrogance of the leaderships is boundless - they are to ballot members on their unamended rule-book, promoting a merger as industrially logical and will seek to discredit any activist-led opposition.

In further rebuffs to the leadership, a merger with the 14,000 strong Communication Managers' Association was similarly rejected - mainly because the CMA membership promoted scabbing during the recent national postal dispute and sought to aid the post office to destroy the Communication Workers' Union.

The highlight of the conference was an announcement by the General Secretary that he had received a fax from the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, regarding union membership at GCHQ (unions had been banned since 1983). With a dramatic flourish, John Sheldon read out the first part of the fax - that with immediate effect employees at GCHQ would be allowed (!!!) to join a union. There was applause, much cheering, and a ten-minute standing ovation for three of the hardy souls who had been sacked for refusing to relinquish their union membership, and who had appeared on cue at the front of the conference hall.

The second part of the fax passed many delegates by, but it proved that at GCHQ little would change - unions would be allowed to negotiate only if they agreed in advance not to take any action to disrupt the work of the spy centre. Once again triumphalism surrounding the announcement was overshadowed by the resignation of conference that the government remained in charge and by acceptance of the reality that little would change.

There was a perceptible air of expectation - the union would mount a campaign against the Jobseekers Allowance, the Convergence Criteria of the Mastricht Treaty, would fight further cuts and demand properly funded services. The delegates at least, were prepared to stick two fingers up to their new Labour Masters.

■ *A "Bread & Roses" correspondent.*

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

In this issue, 'Through the keyhole' takes a peek at the Education Industry. We invite you to shut your eyes and step into the crazy world of Stevenson College as seen through the troubled minds and eyes of a few members of Stevenson College branch of the Education Workers Union (IWW).

Bullying at Work - A Trade Union Issue ?

Sitting a few feet away from the EIS poster which proclaims 'Bullying at work is a trade union issue' I felt strangely comforted, indeed shielded by this fact. Then, I started to wonder what sort of bullying they might tackle, 'cause I'd never seen them tackle zilch.

The talk in the staff room was fast and furious, with tales of Heads of Sections running around like stereotypes from a Victorian asylum. At that precise point, the Head of Arts and Media walked in with a bird cage, containing 'love birds' , strapped to her head. We ignored her and carried on as if nothing was up.

For a Tuesday morning the carnage was awesome. The Head of Photography was apparently on the rampage again and ready to blow. This is the self same 'man - manager' who tells lecturers that he's sick listening to their "shit" at staff meetings; swears at 'his staff' regularly; tries to 'send them home' when he's annoyed with them and fends off official grievance procedures taken out by one member of staff by invoking disciplinary procedures against others. I'd heard he'd got protection from 'Big Oily', one of the 'Ass Principals' and so considered himself fireproof..

Yes, and they say seven - eighths of the iceberg remains below the surface.

I was heading for the lift - shafts when I overheard these dudes in fancy admin 'duds' talking about managing discontent while upping overall productivity. No, it wasn't Brown and Prescott. The dudes were joined by a 'dame' in a business suit containing huge padded shoulders.They were unaware that I was tailing them, so I could overhear the latest plans for staff development. Every non - manager is to be sent to 'workshops'. The theme : "Conflict Resolution : a Team Approach", or to give it the unnofficial name it's known by, "Tension Release for the Termites".

Hell, I was thinking of nipping back into the staff room for another fruit scone when I caught sight of this machine in a room on the first floor. The dudes with duds were demonstrating to the business suit, and 'blow me', it's a Japanese 'frustration release sport'.

The machine has several holes, about the size of heads. As the game starts, heads made of rubber pop out and the player has to hit them back into the holes with a large bat. Each head has a title : Principal, Assistant Principal, Head of Section and various other 'line manager' labels.

I thought to myself, "hey, this is whacky", although no whackier than teachers treating education as a god damn religion. I was thinking of that scone again, as I made my way back to the staff room. On route, I was almost bowled over by three or four frantic members of the Photography and Audio Visual Section weilding large bats and carrying adhesive labels which read 'Head of Photography'.

These are indeed worrying times.

■ ***Derek Devine.***

Twinkle, Twinkle
Senior Staff
Twinkle, twinkle senior staff
I wonder where you are ?
In your office, in your house
or propping up a bar ?

Twinkle, twinkle senior staff
you make me bloody sick,
to earn such massive wages
and to be so god damn thick.

"Old N' Putkin"

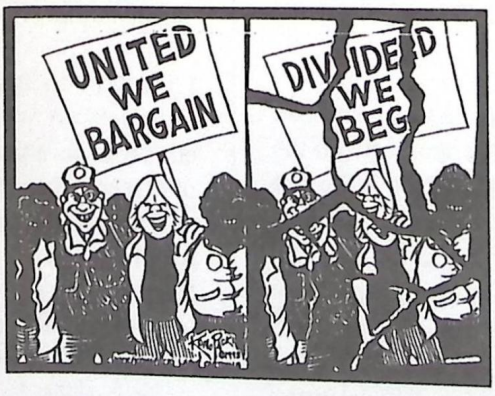
A Sorry Footnote From A Footsore Footsoldier (Re Recladding of Stevenson College)

One looks forward to the day when the refurbishment to the crumbling exterior of the college is complete. For one wonders if there will be a feeling of satisfaction, contentment, even elation. With moderate insight, one would say no. Do you varnish a chest of drawers before you treat them for woodworm ?

"Old N' Putkin"

Kafka Comes To College

I stand at the threshhold, summoning all my strength, willing yet another extra skin to grow, checking I have all the necessary equipment : nerves of steel; the key to being in three different places at once; the confidence to smile professionally while I am being mercilessly scrutinised from above, below, and sideways (but especially from behind my back). Finally, I check that I've left all weapons behind, in case the other gunslingers spot them, become alarmed, and righteously shoot me down in cold blood. Satisfied I am as I should be, I take a deep breath, cross the threshhold and bravely march on towards my workroom, to prepare for another ordinary day of teaching at Stevenson College.



Are all lecturers as paranoid as I am? Well, no....but far too many of us are. In my department, at least, people seldom retire amidst celebrations of a successfully completed career - they disappear, before their time, shipped out on stretchers, suffering from stress-related symptoms. Few retirement handshakes. Just pairs of very human, uncontrollably shaking hands.

It is not that we have a natural tendency towards neuroticism (at least, not all of us!) It's simply that that's what happens when people who want to do a good job are given too much to do, too little time to do it in, too little job security, too much blame for things they have no power over, too many bosses, and very little support.

Having successfully waded towards the classroom, through piles of triplicate admin, lecturers are faced with mobs of students who, quite rightly, know their rights, and, understandably, assume that we genuinely represent the college and the ridiculously rigid rules our modular curriculum requires. Consequently, we are the ones who are

in the direct firing line of their complaints - complaints which many of us agree with, and have frequently voiced ourselves, to no avail. Dodging these misdirected bullets can get a trifle tedious, to say the least. Moreover, it is a constant reminder of our powerlessness within an education system which generally dismisses the informed opinions of its highly trained, professional, and genuinely caring staff. A fine recipe for psychological distress.

As well as dealing with that particular conflict, we are expected to create a positive, healthy learning environment, establishing a trusting bond with our students. Many of them have poor academic histories, and need to feel they can try out new skills without too much fear of failure. Unfortunately, as well as being their teachers and encouragers, we are also their assessors.It is emotionally draining to have to tell your own student that they have failed their assessments, when you know them well, and have a fair idea of how much is at stake for them if they don't pass.

This conflict of roles is a recipe for disaster. All good management text books warn against this very thing. And all good teachers are suffering from the normal result of it - stress, at the very least; an uncomfortable sense of being two-faced; and a creeping suspicion that one is stuck in a psycho-thriller movie about the eventual demise of one "typical-Joe-teacher", who gradually develops a split personality and eventually grows an extra head....

And not only are we teachers and assessors, but we are also the assessed. Our assessments are assessed by other assessors, and we assess other assessors' assessments...How many heads...?

In the midst of all this chaotic confusion and stress, it is essential that colleagues support each other and stick together in the face of adversity. But we don't.

With the general trend of a shrinking staff and shrinking hours, we are all forced to be part of a "team" which is internally riven through having to compete for essential "extra" temporary contract hours. And with constant rumours and facts about job losses in FE establishments throughout Scotland, even fully permanent staff are in fear of losing their posts (or their minds, or both).

Group dynamics experts are quite clear about the effects of this kind of fearful, competitive climate (for evidence check out "Joining Together" - Johnson & Johnson 1987, or Kelly & Stathelski's article in the "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology",16, 1970) : what ensues is the violation of trust between group members, the hiding of information and distortions in communication. It's true. I've seen my colleagues become defensive, territorial, conspiratorial, and, very understandably, paranoid. And paranoia breeds more paranoia. Colleagues turn on other colleagues. I've lost count of the number of grievance procedures and harrassment claims that have been taken out recently. And now, we all have to brace ourselves every morning and, clad in full armour, enter an unpleasant working environment laced with mutual suspicion and hidden explosives...

Meanwhile, the untouchable spectre of the real harrasser- our dysfunctional education and employment system- looms on unchallenged, because those of us who know its ultimate effects are saturated with anxiety, and overloaded with ammunition which we are too damned tired to fire in the right direction.

There are only three ways of coping: some of us resign ourselves to becoming another piece of "natural wastage" and hope for a comfortable stretcher; others just get regularly wasted; and a few of us remain stubbornly optimistic about humanity, and carry on, very Wobbly.

■ ***Alison Douglas***

And now, we all have to brace ourselves every morning and, clad in full armour, enter an unpleasant working environment laced with mutual suspicion and hidden explosives...

Working-On-A-Chain-Gang

The recent years of claimant - bashing have seen the Job Seekers Allowance, the "all work test" for the sick and disabled, cuts in Housing benefit, the Child Support Act, and the removal of benefits from refugees - to mention but a few. Now the worst of all - Project Work. It means compulsory work for benefits. It's an attack on the unemployed - and on all workers. If employers can get conscript labour for nothing it's going to worsen everyone's wages and conditions. It's got to be stopped.

Launched by the Tories, the latest reports indicate that Project Work is still under full sail with Captain Blair. Labour have just announced their own compulsory work for dole plans in the Queen's Speech. These target the under 25's and those unemployed over two years. The current battle over Project Work will have important repercussions for the fight to come over Labour's Welfare - to - (slave) Work programme.

The government is imposing Project Work on 29 areas, covering approximately one third of unemployed claimants in the UK. Slavery is alive and well in East and North East London, Brighton, Norfolk, Nottingham, Bristol, Bolton area, South Tyneside, Swansea, Edinburgh, Dundee, Dunfermline area, and Lanarkshire - among others. The slave scheme started on 27 February in half the areas and in April elsewhere.

Project Work is being forced on everyone in these areas aged 18 - 50 and unemployed for over two years. All such claimants will be compelled to do 13 weeks compulsory work for their benefit, plus a paltry extra £10 per week.

Totally Useless

Even the Employment Service admit that Project Work doesn't offer any training. In the initial Project Work pilots in Hull and Kent, people were given unskilled tasks which taught them nothing."It's a complete waste of time", said Mark, a Project Work participant in Hull. "I'm getting no new training, no new skill, and I'll probably end up signing straight back on at the end of it" (The Scotsman 12.12.96)

> Spud and Renton show how to do it in Trainspotting - make it clear that you are very grateful they are giving a recovering heroin addict another chance.

Escaping Slavery

If you refuse to go on Project Work, or leave your slave camp early they can stop your Job Seekers Allowance for 2 weeks, for a "2nd offence" for 4 weeks.(You should still get housing benefit on the grounds of having no income). If anyone does get their benefit cut, all their mates should go down to the office, demand to see the manager, and refuse to leave until the person gets their benefit back.

But rather than isolated individuals losing benefits, we should all stick together and collectively refuse to co - operate with Project Work (PW). This will make it difficult for them to pick on people.

Resistance is NOT futile. Claimants can fight back.

The Third Degree

The first 13 weeks of PW involves "intensive job search". This means being hassled at restart - type interviews every 2 weeks. You have a right to be accompanied at your PW interview. Take a friend with you. When they tell you about Project Work you could let the Job Centre interviewer know what you think of compulsory work for dole.

If you are unhappy with the attitude of your interviewer, complain to the manager and say you want to be interviewed by someone else. This tactic has often succeeded, in Edinburgh at least, for Restart interviews.Remember Job Club and Training for Work (working for benefit plus £10) are still voluntary. If you are asked to apply for crap jobs you don't want, do an application/ interview that will make sure you don't get the job - reveal that shocking criminal record, ask

about trade unions, sick and holiday pay, etc (but don't go over the top or they could cut your benefit). Spud and Renton show how to do it in Trainspotting - make it clear that you are very grateful they are giving a recovering heroin addict another chance.

Working on a Chain Gang

After the 13 weeks of fortnightly interviews, they plan to start the compulsory part of Project Work. Claimants will be sent to Training Providers, who are being paid to place Project Work conscripts in workplaces. These are private companies like Tomorrow's People who are owned by Grand Met, Instant Muscle, and a myriad of other sharks who already make a fat profit from running Training for Work, Restart courses, Job Plan workshops and other useless schemes. There's cash for some in the privatised poverty industry.

But even if you're a Project Work conscript, all is not lost. If the Training Provider sends dole slaves to a workplace all could make it clear that they are all there under protest, and have no intention of working hard. Hints that you are very accident prone and always breaking things, could be dropped, heavily. With any luck this will put the employer off and they will send everyone back to the Training Provider.

Spanner in the Works

Dole slaves could talk to the workers that already work there, and encourage them to pressurise their boss to pull out of Project Work. After all Project Work is a threat to their wages and conditions - if the boss can get free slave labour, he will soon make redundancies and worsen conditions for his original workers - threatening them that if they don't like more work and less wages then he can get workers who have no choice.

Boycott

In some areas, like Edinburgh, Project Work is especially aimed at the private sector. Elsewhere they will target voluntary organisations.

Your boss might be approached to take on Project Work slaves. Are we going to let them get away with this ?

It's action that's needed to stop Project Work. It's no good people saying it's wrong - and then doing nothing. If your boss is planning to use Project Work slave labour, we ask you to consider taking collective action to refuse to allow Project Work into your workplace. In many cases the threat of real resistance could be enough to put an employer off.

The PW pilot schemes in Kent and on Humberside have met with widespread opposition. The local Councils and most local charities have boycotted the scheme. Karen Spooner, chair of Humberside Voluntary Sector Alliance, says "We didn't think it was appropriate to offer placements, particularly in care work, to people who were compelled to be there under threat of losing their benefit".

Already the Scottish Council of Voluntary organisations and Community Service Volunteers Scotland have announced their opposition. "We will not be taking part, and most voluntary sector providers will be reluctant to participate", says Paul Zealey, for Community Service Volunteers Scotland (both quotes from The Scotsman 12.12.96)

The benefit authorities are already in difficulties trying to implement the new Job Seekers Allowance. It will be difficult for them to find enough places for Project Work slaves. A widespread boycott could make a real difference.

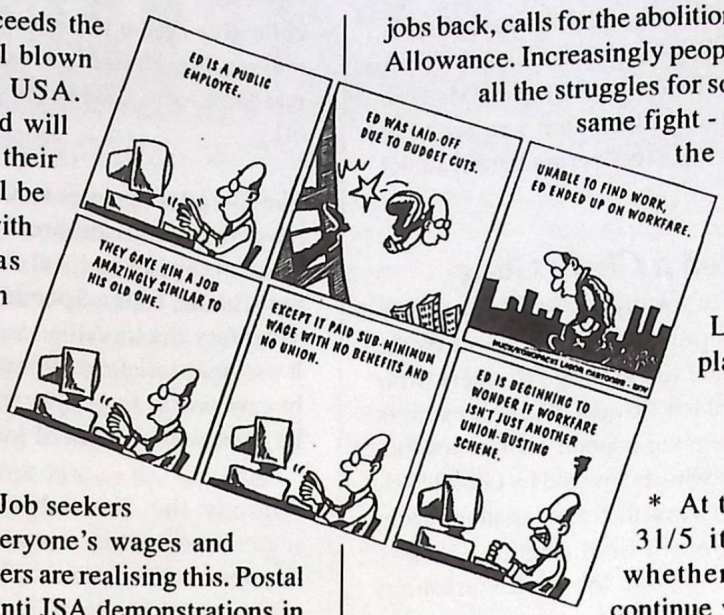
How To Make Project Work Unworkable

For PW to function they need to find employers willing to take on PW placements. This is the potential weak point of Project Work. If enough people get involved in fighting PW we can persuade these employers that using Project Work workers will be more trouble than it's worth.

Schemes like Project Work and the Job Seekers Allowance are part of the same pro - rich anti working class policy that the Tory government imposed on everyone outside the favoured circle of fat cats. Cutting public spending and benefits, holding down wages, restricting the right to strike and picket, boosting tax cuts and profits for the rich - they all went together. Now Labour look set to continue the same policies, with one important difference. Tony's inane grin.

As Gordon Brown announces no more cash for local authorities, Project Work could be used to try and cover for some of the massive cuts that Councils in Scotland are currently trying to inflict on public services and voluntary organisations.

If Project Work succeeds the next step will be full blown workfare like the USA. Everyone unemployed will be forced to work for their benefits. Workers will be sacked and replaced with dole conscripts - as recently happened on the New York subway, and as happens here with young workers and Youth Training.


ED IS A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE.
ED WAS LAID-OFF DUE TO BUDGET CUTS.
UNABLE TO FIND WORK, ED ENDED UP ON WORKFARE.
THEY GAVE HIM A JOB AMAZINGLY SIMILAR TO HIS OLD ONE.
EXCEPT IT PAID SUB-MINIMUM WAGE WITH NO BENEFITS AND NO UNION.
ED IS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF WORKFARE ISN'T JUST ANOTHER UNION-BUSTING SCHEME.

Project Work and the Job seekers Allowance attacks everyone's wages and conditions. More workers are realising this. Postal workers have joined anti JSA demonstrations in Edinburgh. The Social Charter launched by the Liverpool dockers, sacked and fighting for their jobs back, calls for the abolition of the Job Seekers Allowance. Increasingly people are realising that all the struggles for social justice are the same fight - this was shown by the 20,000 strong March for Social Justice in London on 12 April this year. Let's reclaim the planet.

■ "J. Ball"

* At the time of writing 31/5 it is still unclear whether Labour will continue with project work or not. What is clear, is that it will have some form of compulsory scheme.

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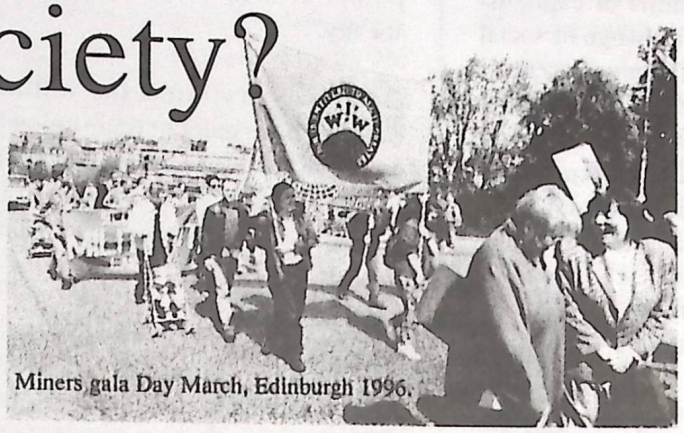
Can Unions Transform Society?



Miners gala Day March, Edinburgh 1996.

John Bissett summarises the views of writers who questioned trade unionism and its potential for revolutionary activity.

Although Marx and Engels fervently believed in the abolition of capitalism as a political, social and economic system, and its replacement with one in which production was geared to satisfying needs and not profit and in which people gave of their abilities and took according to their needs - they held out little faith in trade unionism as a vehicle for such change. They did, however, see trade unions as the breeding grounds for class consciousness and ultimately a revolutionary class consciousness.

In the 1840's, Engels, in 'The Conditions of the Working Classes', argued that the unions prepared the workers for the final showdown with capitalism. Strikes, he affirmed, were "the military school of the working man". Unions were "schools of war" in which the workers learnt about exploitation and the class struggle first hand. This idea was echoed by Marx in 'The Poverty of Philosophy', when he spoke of unions as "ramparts for the workers", and how the trade union experience "served to generate among workers a consciousness of class unity", turning the working class from "a class in itself" into "a class of itself".

Marx argued that the capitalist system threw masses of workers together, creating at the same time the conditions, borne of deprivation, that spurred them to action. The unions they formed would secure only limited economic reforms - a few crumbs from the masters' tables - and lead workers to adopt more political forms of action in pursuit of the whole cake.

On their own, fighting for reforms, unions were always going to be limited in what they could achieve. "The very development of modern industry", wrote Marx, in 'Wages, Price and Profit', "turns the scales in favour of the capitalist against the working man". Short - sighted objectives only prolonged and increased the immiseration of the workers. Engels agreed, having pointed out in 'The Condition of the Working Classes', that the efforts of unions "cannot alter the economic laws according to which wages are determined ... unions are powerless against all great forces".

Fighting the effects of capitalism was futile for Marx and Engels. Instead of rallying around banners demanding "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" they had to use their collective strength and fight for the "abolition of the wages system" ('Wages, Price and Profit'). Unions had provided the preconditions for class solidarity, all that remained was for that shared sense of injustice to be pointed in the right direction, at the cause of the suffering - capitalism - not its myriad symptoms.

Other writers, although not seeing in trade unions a threat to the capitalist system, nevertheless shared Marx and Engels' views that trade unionism fostered a consciousness, or rather an idea that society could be changed for the better. Lenin himself, although he was

later to change his views in light of the events of 1905, argued that "every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind" ('On Strikes',1899). Again, Trotsky also believed, once, that the struggle for objectively unobtainable reforms would generate an awareness of the structural limits of capitalist society, nurturing a desire for a change of social system. These ideas were still finding a receptive audience many years later. Indeed, Eric Hobsbawm, in 'Labouring Men' (1964), believed that a "spontaneous" trade union experience created two demands - immediate demands, reforms etc, and a general disapproval of the existing social system, " a general aspiration after a more satisfactory one ... a vague utopianism ... as spontaneous a product of proletarian experience as reformism".

For such writers, and others of the Marxist tradition, although trade unions were not the agents of social change, they were useful in instilling a sense of solidarity in workers, in their own collective strength, in nurturing the idea of an alternative social system and in preparing workers for the final onslaught against capitalism. For every writer who saw in trade unions the seeds for potential revolutionary activity, there were, on the other hand, dozens who held the opposite view - that trade unions, either because of the conservative nature of their leadership or the sectionalism inherent in trade unions, posed no threat to the established order.

Lenin, in 'What is to be Done', argued that trade unions had no revolutionary theory and therefore could not be a revolutionary movement. Because unions fought against legislation and for reforms, they had a micro - political outlook which could only manifest itself as a "trade union consciousness". Their politics were "bourgeois politics" and they could never gain a revolutionary class consciousness by themselves. This could only be delivered by a bourgeois intelligentsia and brought to the working class from without, by professional revolutionaries, a vanguard. For Lenin, unions had become integrated into the system that exploited them because they were satisfied with the achievement of objectives within the framework of capitalism. Again, Lenin pointed to trade union sectionalism as a barrier to the revolutionary transformation of society. This was an idea that was later developed by Antonio Gramsci, the Italian communist leader. Gramsci, in 'L'Ordine Nuovo 1919 - 1922', argued that unionism only "unites workers according to the tools of their trade". Thus, unions were only a manifestation of capitalist society, and "not a potential means of transforming capitalist society".

Other writers cited the authoritative and conservative nature of trade union bureaucrats as an obstacle to the demise of capitalism brought about by revolutionary trade unionism. Trotsky himself held the view that one of the barriers to the establishment of socialism (Trotsky's "socialism", that is) was the conservative ideology of trade union leaders who were "impregnated with the spirit of the bourgeoisie" ('Where is Britain Going ?'). Indeed, it was thanks to the bourgeois outlook of trade union leaders " that the whole structure of capitalism now stands upright ... especially in Britain".

R W Michels was also to point to the bourgeois character of the trade union leadership in 'Political Parties' as being an obstacle to the overthrow of capitalism. "The authoritative character of the leaders", he argued, meant that unions were as "prone as any other organisation to the iron law of oligarchy". The organisation became an end in itself and had to survive at all costs, even if this meant working within the state apparatus and never overstepping the battle lines drawn by the state. Union oligarchies precluded direct democracy for the rank and file, whose apathy and acceptance of the leadership leant legitimacy to oligarchic control. Moreover, because of their coveted position, the financial rewards their position brought and their hankering after widespread respectability, the union bureaucracy enjoyed a " petty bourgeois lifestyle" and lost "all true sense of solidarity with the class from which they have sprung" and, indeed, were supposed to represent. Hence, institutional needs took precedence over the "manifest goals of an organisation ... conferring upon it a profoundly conservative character".

Hyman also observed the conservative character of unions, pointing out that because unions sought

acceptance by the state and by employees and a degree of respectability in the process, trade union conflict became "institutionalised, professionalised and more or less antiseptic".('Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism')

There has been a strong tendency to view unions as being of little or no use to the struggle for working class emancipation. Some have argued that if there was a period when the unions could have assisted in the struggle it has long since passed. Kerr, in 'Labour and Management in Industrial Society', believed the trade union threat peaked early in its infancy, not late. Unions had become so much a part of present day society that "rather than facing greater and greater conflict ending in revolution" they had created a situation where industrial societies face more and more peace. Wright Mills shared similar views and spoke of a "growing together of union bureaucracies and the controlling institutions of capitalism", and how companies and unions act as disciplining agents for each other, both constraining the activities of unionised employees ('The New Men of Power")

The same arguments can easily be leveled against unions today, or rather their officials who, so afraid of the consequences of breaching anti - union legislation, have developed a bunker mentality, afraid to pop their heads up in case they're blown off. It can be argued that the Tory term in office has helped foster in unions the 'iron law of oligarchy outlook', where unions use up more energy struggling to survive in a hostile environment than in trying to change it.

Unions nowadays embody many trappings that reduce their revolutionary potential, as those quoted have observed. They include sectionalism and the inter - fighting between unions for membership, all of which strengthens the hand of capitalism by fragmenting its adversaries. Union support for mainstream parties (not mentioned by those quoted) also blinds workers to the cause of their misery (Labour in power has been no different to the Tories). Neither do the above mentioned refer to the international dimension of trade unionism and how unions cannot match industrial capital's ability to cross borders. The significance is paramount.

Today, from Magnet to the Mersey, from Russia to Colombia and from Israel to South Korea, frustration and anger borne of the harsh reality of life in capitalist society continues to spur workers to action. Capitalism, though, cannot be confronted by unions operating within the confines of their respective countries fighting for reforms, rather like a sniper firing shots at an immense advancing army. Only when workers unite internationally, unleashing their latent organisational strength and redirecting it towards the struggle for working class emancipation, can they contribute to the overthrow of a system that exploits them.

There exists a great potential for a genuine world - wide, class - conscious mobilisation of the world's working class, harnessing their grievances to the struggle for real emancipation from the myriad ills thrown up by the profit system. Once workers take on board the idea that exploitation is global - that there is more that unites workers as a global exploited majority than can ever divide them along sectional, religious or political lines (the basis on which some unions recruit); and that our misery can only be expunged by putting behind us our differences and uniting across the artificial boundaries workers are conditioned to imbibe - then we can halt capitalism in its tracks, replacing it with a system in which all are truly free from exploitation and have equal access to the benefits of civilisation.

Unions are primarily working class organisations. They should be responsive to working - class interests, not instruments for compounding superficial beliefs that weaken the unity they were set up to enhance. They should promote class consciousness and international solidarity, not perpetuate the myths that keep capitalism in the ascendancy. They need to widen their field of conflict and help win the world for the workers. Ideally, there should be one big union for the world's one big exploited class.

■ ***John Bissett.***

Towards Workplace Democracy

As we all know, the average workplace is far from being a bastion of democracy. Indeed, if your experience matches mine, it is more likely to be a stronghold of authority and bureaucracy on the one hand, and of slavery and exploitation on the other.

There is no truer statement than the one which declared that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Therefore, as we have the responsibility for getting our work done, should we not also have the freedom to decide how, when and why we do that work ?

As long as we let other people control our lives (which is what our employers effectively do), then our working lives will continue to be drab, boring and unfulfilling.

Hence the choice before us is between that of continuing to accept our position in society as the slaves of others, or of getting together and asserting our right to manage our lives ourselves.

By taking over and democratically running our workplaces, we will be able to both free ourselves from wage slavery, and also introduce those changes which will make our lives easier.

We will be in a position to decide both what work needs to be done and how it will be done. It will also be up to us to agree upon the length of our working day, so that we can find an equilibrium between fulfilling our economic needs and our desires for leisure, recreation and having the time to pursue our own hobbies and interests.

Sounds very nice, I hear you say, but no doubt you some doubts as to whether it's possible. The answer to the question of whether or not it can be done is contained within us all. If we seriously want more control over our lives, then the only thing that will be able to stop us from gaining it is our own timidity.

Our employers are helpless without our co - operation,, and our power lies in the fact that it is us, the workers, who produce all the world's wealth.

This is why the strike is such an important workers' weapon. While the world would hardly be affected if all bosses took the day or week off, the world would certainly come to a complete halt if workers did the same.

Thus the most important weapon in our arsenal is the general strike, as has clearly been shown by recent events in both France and Canada. These strikes have shown just how important working people are to the smooth running of the world, and they explain why our employers would be well advised to treat us a lot better than they do.

However, if our employers feel that we will never do anything against them, that we will never go on strike, let alone visualise ourselves taking control of our own destinies, then they will continue to treat us as they do.

Even the simple threat of a strike may well be enough to win us a pay rise or improvement in working conditions.

Yet we cannot just concern ourselves with events in our own company or industry. As the world is becoming more and more dominated by multinational companies, a multinational response is becoming increasingly necessary. In future all workers' struggles will have to be international in scope if they are to have more than a moderate chance of success.

As our employers can at present run rings around us by transferring business from one country to another, so we will be able to reverse the situation as soon as we are organised globally to prevent them from doing so.

This brings us back to the question of how these things can be done. Of how we can reduce our employers control over our lives and increase our own.

The answer is quite simple really. Basically, the better organised we are and the more we stand up for ourselves, the more control we will have and the better our lives will be.

Now to our second question. If workers were to be in a position to democratically run industry themselves, would they be able to run it efficiently ? We are not here talking about bringing about "Heaven on Earth", simply of having a healthier and more stable economy.

Yet we already do run industry ourselves. The problem is that policies are decided by a small number of large shareholders and top executives who don't actually do the work, or feel the full force of the result of their policies. You shouldn't have to look any further than the backlog in your in - tray to see the proof of this.

The experiences of previous occasions when workers have taken control of industry and run it themselves show that we should have more faith in our own abilities, and that we should place the ideas of our employers firmly in the dustbin where they belong.

With the freedom to decide how industry is to be run, we are more than capable of running the economy efficiently. Or do you not think that you would be responsible enough to make a good job of it ?

Fire your boss today !

x343263.

IWW Directory

IWW Regional Organising Committee. For contacts throughout Britain write or phone this office :IWW, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 4WB. Tel : (0116) 266 1835.

Swindon Mixed Industries Branch and Swindon Research Councils IU.620 group contact :
Kevin Brandstatter, 9 Omdurman Street, Swindon, SN2 1HA.

General Distribution Workers IU.660 and Bournemouth IWW contact :
Ray Carr, Flat 2, 35 Parkwood Road, Boscombe, Dorset, BH5 2BS.

Dover Mixed Industries Group contact :
Patrick Carey, 14b Castle Avenue, Dover, Kent, CT16 1EZ. Tel : (01304) 216102.

London Couriers and London Mixed Industries Group contact :
c/o IWW, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 4BY.

Tyne and Wear Mixed Industries Branch contact:
John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 2AL.

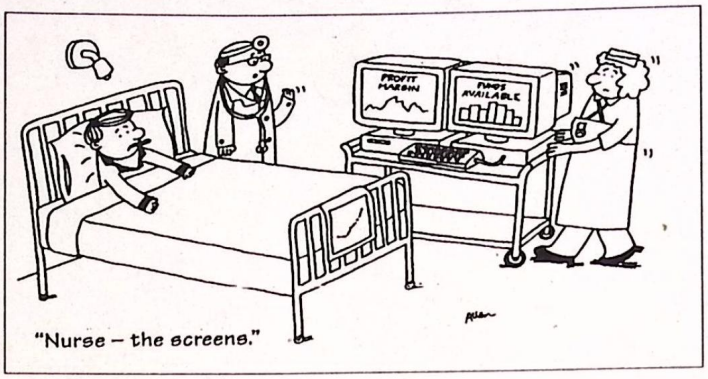
Stevenson College Branch Education Workers Union IU.620 contact : Education Workers Union, Stevenson College, Room 3.05, Bankhead Avenue, Sighthill, Edinburgh.

For further information on members active in other IWW industrial unions in Edinburgh, contact Derek Devine on Tel No. 0131 229 2699

Glasgow Mixed Industries Group contact : Derek Devine on Tel No. 0131 229 2699

Sectionalism In The Health Service Leads to Crap Pay Offers.

On Tuesday 8th April this year the Royal Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery (RCN & M) voted by 12 votes to 11 in the Nurses' Whitley Council to accept the Conservative government's pay award of 3.3%, payable in stages. This sell - out by the RCN / RCM leadership came in the same week as the national press publicised the findings of a survey that showed Hospital Trust chief executives had received pay rises twice as high as nurses and other healthworkers, their average basic salary having risen by 6.2%. Even more astounding is the fact it was no more than three weeks before the General Election, when the vast majority of healthworkers were hoping that they would wake up on May 2nd with a new government committed to fair pay for all health staff, but instead we have the RCN / RCM throwing in the towel and accepting the Conservative government's insulting pay - offer.



"Nurse – the screens."

I believe that the acceptance of this pay offer shows that all healthworkers should be in one union with one voice. At the moment there is upwards of thirty trade unions / professional organisations within the NHS. This sectionalism only benefits the bosses. For years the unions always campaigned for all healthworkers to receive the same pay offers as Doctors and Nurses (these groups are covered by a Pay Review Body). For this year, this means that the pay offer accepted by the professional organisations means that all healthworkers will, if they're lucky, receive a pay offer of 2.43%. This is due to the staging process which pays 2% from April 1 1997 and 1.3% from 1 December 1997. The 1.3% part of it is not backdated from 1 December to April which then leaves the health staff with a 2.43% pay offer for the year.

In accepting the pay offer the Royal Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery appear to be more scared of an incoming Labour government than they were of the Tories. The Labour government is committed to assessing the whole NHS pay structure and is intending to overhaul the pay system as it stands. This has caused quite a panic within the ranks of the assorted professional organisations who feel their professionalism will somehow be compromised by the government's assessment. Unfortunately, they would rather have all healthworkers' pay negotiated separately instead of 'single - table' bargaining , which is one of the proposals being looked at by the government. As a Healthworker, I feel single - table bargaining can only be of benefit to all the staff who collectively make up the Healthcare team , be it as nurses, midwives, domestics, clerical staff or therapists. We need to end the fragmentation of the NHS.

However, this pay farce does not end there. In the UK last year, the average national pay award for 60% of healthworkers was only 2.8% due to local negotiations for pay. What this then means is that healthworkers who received, as in my own case, 3% of a pay rise last year could end up with 0.2% taken off of this year's pay offer : which would then leave us with 2.23% of a pay rise.

This joke of a pay rise should prove beyond any doubt that the age - old tactic of divide and rule favoured by governments and bosses throughout the world is working well within the National Health Service. The only way to challenge this 'divide and rule' is to speak, united with one voice, in One Big Union.

■ ***Healthworker.***